

THE BEACON

FOR SCHOOL AND HOME

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It was a lean winter everywhere — cold, and barren, and deep white. The snow came down in thick, soft flakes, and the wind, rising during the first hours of the storm, caught it and swept and piled it into the hollows, along the fences, in great heaps where the roads turned. But hillsides and high roads and wide level stretches were left almost barren.

The little village of Paloma, some eighteen miles from the muddy, freezing Mississippi, was isolated and snowbound on the little hills. Somehow, Paloma had been forgotten in the race of time. It numbered some one hundred and fifty souls! There was one street with lamps on it. Many of the houses had furnaces; some, the luxury of bathrooms. But in many of them, the old folks were shivering around a coal burner, while the young folks, by the light of kerosene lamps, struggled, with fingers stiff and chill, to don party clothes for a taffy pull, or a sleigh ride, or a royal good time somewhere.

Paloma's old folks had, most of them, been born and reared there, and would die there. They knew nothing else — would know nothing else. An occasional trip to "the city," a visit in the next county — these were great things. But the young folks! Somehow, a bit of the eagerness and zest of greater things had crept in to them. They went away eight miles to high school, and played football and basketball, and helped write for the paper, and even talked of college!

One there was who could not go. Joe Thomas, one night in the cold winter, sat in his wheel chair with his sleek black head bent above his sketching boards. Joe had been a cripple ever since he fell from a dead limb, on his way to a crow's nest. But he had never lost his place with the gang.

There came a familiar whistle, and then great stamping outside, and in from the dusky twilight came Vergne Halstead. Vergne's father had been one of the best farmers in the county. Now Vergne and

Don and the Shadow

By Mattie F. Simmonds



his mother lived in the white cottage on the hill in Paloma — not quite alone, however. A great collie came in with Vergne. He stepped just inside the door, and shook himself thoroughly.

Joe looked at the strong, shaggy brown body, with the lovely white throat — at the intelligent eyes. He put aside his sketching boards.

"Hello, Don, old boy," and he put out a hand. Don walked across to him, with dignity, and, for an instant, laid his head in that hand. Joe looked at him.

"Good old fellow!" and his hand caressed the throat, while his face became suspiciously tender.

Vergne, hat and coat removed, had sat down, but there was no smile on his face. Joe, looking at him, knew something to be amiss.

"What's up, Vergne?" he asked, letting fall his hand. Don walked over by the stove and lay down, his head on his forepaws, his eyes watching the boys.

"Trouble, I'm afraid."

"What kind of trouble? For you?"

Vergne nodded. He cleared his throat. He looked at Don, then back again at Joe.

"Remember that time so long ago when they said Don was killing sheep?"

"Sure — but, Vergne, you don't mean — why, nobody —"

"Yes, they do. Somehow a man never has good sense when things begin to happen to his sheep."

Joe's face flushed hotly. His eyes were dark with anger.

"Well, it isn't fair! Anybody knows Don is a gentleman! Why, he hasn't a single black mark to his record. Didn't they prove it that other time? You know whose dog it was! They haven't any proof against Don, have they?"

"No, of course. It's just the same old story — they are sure they've seen Don — that's all. I'd heard rumors of the sheep disappearing, being killed and eaten. There are three or four flocks out not so far away, you know, and the farmers had them in near the barns, but in this sunshiny weather they've been letting them out on the hills in daytime for a couple of weeks, they tell me. Well, something is getting sheep, now, out of the pens near the barns at night."

"It isn't Don, anyhow."

"That's what I think, but there aren't many dogs around here big enough to kill sheep. Of course, they'll travel for miles if they get the craze, but that would be hard to prove."

"Yes — I know."

"Well, you see, Joe, the thing has gone on until it has been too much, and Friday night Homer Norris kept watch. He says there was more than one dog, but he's sure he saw Don. He fired, but didn't hit anything. It was sort of dark and cloudy."

"I'll never believe it was Don."

"Neither will I. But he came up to the house Saturday; and you know there was a basketball game with Clayton that night. I'd gone into town early after lunch for some committee meetings, and went to the game, and stayed over Sunday with Aunt Ella. Mother was alone, and Homer Norris said he'd shoot Don if he wasn't chained. So she chained him, until I got back, Joe."

Actual tears stood in the eyes of Joe Thomas. He looked across at the beautiful, proud head of the collie.

"She chained Don!"

"It isn't mother's fault, Joe. She didn't know what else to do. But of course I let him loose. And now, tonight, I have to do something about it."

"You're not chaining him tonight?"

"No, Joe, I'm not. I'm going to let him alone. If he leaves, I'll try to follow without his knowing. I know the very best dogs can become sheep killers — and I know living in town is hard on a good collie like Don. I do the best I can by him, but it isn't what he ought to have. It would just about — break me up — if I'd ever find Don doing anything as low as that, Joe! But I have to risk it, in order to prove him one way or the other. I have a few theories, but they may not hold. I'm thinking a lot of that other time, Joe. Don's one of the best collies I've ever seen, and his first instinct is to protect."

For a long time Joe and Vergne talked animatedly, while Don watched them, between little naps. At last, Vergne rose, donned mackinaw and cap and went out with the dog. It wasn't a long walk over the crisp snowy hollows and the windswept hills. Vergne shivered in the cold white moonlight. It had been such a strange, hard winter. He wondered how the wild things could possibly find food — with everything frozen or snowbound. His mother had been feeding birds for months, and in the last weeks, rabbits and squirrels had joined them, lean and hungry.

Outside the cottage door, he stooped and put a hand on either side the dear old head. Roughly, but caressingly, he shook the dog's head between his hands.

"You're going to be all right, aren't you, old fellow? Kennel nice and warm? You'd not go chasing out into the cold, would you? You just have to keep faith with me, Don!"

A final bear hug, and the door closed behind Vergne. Don stood a little while, looking after him, and then went quietly and lay down inside his kennel.

"What have you decided, son?" asked Mother Halstead, lifting a sweet face from her knitting.

"I'm not chaining him, mother. I'm going to sit up and watch, and follow if he goes. That's the way I cleared it up the other time."

The Animal Party

BY HATTIE VOSE HALL

Mother said I could have a party,
And ask any one I like;
And so I'll have old Captain Blaisdell
And his big dog, Marlinspike.

Florence will bring her kitty, Sweet-heart,
And her Airedale, Donald Dhu,
And Tommy will bring his two pet rabbits,
King Karl and Silly Sue.

I'll ask John Blake for his new canary,
He's a lovely bird to sing,
And Grandpa will let me have parrot Polly,
She can talk like anything!

And we'll teach them all to sing together
To the music of my drum —
It will be a perfectly splendid party,
I hope they all can come!

"I hate to have you do that, son. I'm always anxious about you."

"You needn't be. I'll take my rifle and a flashlight, and I'll be careful."

"Well, I'm just sure Don wouldn't kill sheep, but it is strange that the flock hasn't been molested these two nights, at all."

"Yes — I suppose it is; but after Mr. Norris shot at them, it may have frightened away whatever dog is doing it."

"I know."

By and by, Mother Halstead, with a pleading little "Be careful, won't you, Vergne?" and a kiss on top of his brown head, went to bed, leaving Vergne busily reading "The Last of the Mohicans." He had a book report to make, and the volume must be finished. At ten-thirty he ended the last page.

On the kitchen table he put his mackinaw, cap, gloves, flashlight and loaded rifle. With the lights out, he stationed himself on a chair by the window, where he could see the dark kennel outlined against the snow in the cold moonlight.

All was still in the house — and outside. Not a breath of wind moved the bare branches of the trees, or ruffled the shining frozen drifts of snow. All the world was white and black beneath a remote blue sky, and a moon as cold as the snow itself.

Suddenly Don was standing outside the kennel. Vergne had not seen him come out, but there he stood. Noiselessly, watching, Vergne rose and stepped back. His hand found the mackinaw — drew it on — the gloves — the cap. He put the flashlight in his pocket, and grasped the loaded rifle.

Don lifted his head. His white throat gleamed in the frosty air. His nose pointed at the cold moon. He gave an uneasy whine that became a faint, slender

howl — another — another. Then, suddenly, he galvanized into action, whirled and shot off across the snowy hills.

Vergne wasted no time in getting out the door and starting after the collie. It was easy to see him, a blur against the snow ahead. Don was not traveling so fast, but he was heading straight for Homer Norris' sheep pens.

He came near — nearer — slowed to a walk — crept around the barn and past the side fence of the pen until he was right at the front corner. All this time his body had been fairly flattened against the ground. He kept motionless.

Vergne had been fighting down the sickness within him all the way. He knew Don. Don would keep faith. He must believe in him, even though appearances were against him. And why, if he came to kill the sheep, had Don gone to the front corner of the pen? The sheep were huddled back beneath the shed by the barn.

Vergne stopped alongside the barn, and watched the dog. Presently, his ears twitched, pointed erect, and the hair on his neck bristled. Vergne looked away, then to the hills beyond. And there, on the hilltop, was a shadow — a lean, dark shadow, that came quickly — halted — and came on. There was something about the lonely figure that made Vergne forget all else. Something had clutched at his throat as he saw that shadow stand alone, quiet, before it began to move down the hill. A long time it paused at the foot, waiting to cross the level stretch. And now, with his body yet flattened, Don crept backwards, along the fence noiselessly, until he was almost to the sheds.

Vergne looked to his rifle — cocked it. He could hear the sheep moving restlessly. A bell tinkled — an old ewe gave an uneasy bleat. Then he saw the shadow begin to move, quickly, rushing, toward the fence. And just as it made the leap, two things happened — old Don whirled, was over the fence into the pen, and stood defiantly before the sheds; and Vergne's rifle spoke once — twice.

Vergne and Homer Norris — who had hastily risen at sound of the rifle, pulled on a few clothes, and come running out — faced each other across the shadowy form on the ground. Old Don stood in front of the sheds, his snowy throat proud and courageous, his teeth showing.

"It's a grey wolf, Vergne. They say there's been three or four seen over in the next county, but no one has seen any here. It's no wonder the sheep have gone. He must have been starving to come right down to the sheds that way. Well, he's yours, bounty and hide and all, and I'm sure obliged to you, Vergne."

Vergne did not lift his eyes, nor speak. He just stood there, looking down at the dead wolf. And presently Homer Norris cleared his throat.

"Guess I owe you an apology. I hope

you won't have no hard feelings about the dog. I've always admired him and thought well of him, but when your sheep start to go, you'll suspect any dog until you get the right one. But I hope there won't be no hard feelings. I'm sure obliged."

Vergne Halstead looked over at the beautiful head, the quiet, strong body. He laughed.

"That's all right, Mr. Norris. I didn't know what to do at first. Don's a thoroughbred, but it's hard to prove the truth where sheep are concerned. I guess he's cleared himself, though."

Homer Norris looked at the still, guarding figure.

"He sure has," he said. "You help me carry the wolf into the barn. We'll leave him there tonight. Then maybe Don'll think it's safe for him to go home."

Ten minutes later, a tall, athletic lad and a handsome collie were going homeward over the snow. But this time they walked together. They were happy — and there was no shadow against the hill.

How the Bee Keeps Warm

By Effie E. Baker

IN the winter, when we sit cozy and comfortable in a room warmed by furnace or stove or open grate, what about the wild animals, the birds, and the bees? We know nature takes care of them in various ways. Some animals grow thick coats of fur, some burrow in the ground, eating food stored during the summer, while others hibernate, that is, go to sleep and so need no food until spring comes.

The bees have a very interesting way of keeping warm. You know that the native home of bees is either in a hollow tree or in a cave in which they can live snug and warm, feeding on their store of honey.

How do you suppose they keep themselves warm? That is the surprising thing about them. You know that the queen bee of the hive is the big one that lays the eggs. Wherever she is, the others cluster around her. When she leaves the hive, the others follow her, and we say they are swarming.

In cold weather she does not leave the hive but stays close inside while all the others cluster around her. They form a great ball with the queen in the center. Now, the surprising thing is that they keep themselves warm by flapping their tiny wings. Of course, only those on the outside can flap as they pack down pretty tight. When those on the outside have flapped so rapidly and so violently that they are tired, they fold up their wings and crawl down deeper into the bee-ball to rest themselves a little.

Then the fellows who are pushed to the outside open up their wings and fan away for dear life until they get so thor-



THE CROW'S NEST

BY
WAITSTILL
HASTINGS
SHARP

Text: Judge me, O Lord, according to my righteousness, and according to mine integrity that is in me.—Psalm 7: 8.

LAST Sunday we went to France and turned the clock back about one thousand years and looked at some cruel old customs which were followed in the courts when a man was being tried for a crime or any other bad deed. We saw that trial by battle and trial by water and trial by fire were all invented by men who thought that God would change his laws for each person and would show what man he didn't like.

We know now that God doesn't treat people like that. But let's not laugh at the people who lived in France so long ago. They were doing their best. And if they had not done their best a long while ago we wouldn't be trying something different today and calling it *our* best.

There is another good reason for not laughing at the old judges and lawyers of nearly one thousand years ago. They had a beautiful custom in their courts which *we* might adopt.

Suppose a man was brought into court and accused of a crime and suppose he said, "All right. I'll prove that I'm innocent in a trial by battle. Bring on the swords!"

Then a man would be picked out to fight with him and the two men would dress in armor made of pieces of steel, each would pick up his sword or his great mace (a battle axe), and they would go to it! Bang! Bang! Whack! Crash! the great axes would rise and fall while the people stood around. The armor would

oughly warmed up that they can warm those underneath them. By taking turns this way they keep from freezing all winter.

If the winter is very, very cold, or unusually long, the bees have to flap so much that they are quite worn out and weak when warm weather comes and are not able to gather much honey during the spring and early summer when the honey is best. Such a winter also makes it necessary for them to eat about twice as much honey as during a mild winter.

Beekeepers have put thermometers into the hives, and how warm do you think they have found them? One man says that when it was 16 degrees below zero

be broken and pieces would fly off, the beautiful crests on the helmets would be chopped off and sometimes blood would flow. But suppose these men were so equal in strength that the accused man was still fighting at the end of an hour. Then the judge would say: "God likes that man. He is not guilty."

Then the accused would take off his helmet and would walk into court. The judge would say: "You are not guilty."

And then would occur the beautiful custom to which I referred. The judge would rise and look steadily at the freed man and then he would say:

"*Allez a Dieu!*" which is the French for "Go forth to God." It meant that the court had done all it could to prove the guilt of the man who was accused. Now he was to be freed and only God to be his judge. Only God knew whether he had done the wrong — his conscience was to be the only voice to comfort or condemn him.

You may not think that is a beautiful custom. But I do. I think that that old command, "Go forth to God," might very well be a part of our court customs today and ought to be a part of everyone's life and thinking today. Now, when a jury comes into the court room and says: "We find the defendant not guilty!" everyone cheers and shouts while the judge bangs his gavel for order and the court officers try to shout above the whole racket. How much better it would be if the jury stood up to give their verdict and the defendant stood up alone to face them, and then remained standing after he was acquitted. Then wouldn't you be thrilled to see the judge rise in his black gown with the United States flag on the wall behind him, lay down his gavel and look steadily at the defendant and say, while the court room is as still as midnight: "Go forth to God!" Then the defendant would turn and face all the eyes in the courtroom as he walks out to his freedom. I think it would be a new freedom and a new start for more than the man walking out to meet his conscience.

outside, he found the bees very comfortable. Indeed, the queen bee was quite comfortable at 72 degrees while the bees on the surface of the ball were at 57 degrees. In the corners of the hive where there were no bees, it was 16 degrees above. And remember, just outside it was 16 below!

No wonder we say "the busy little bee." It has to work hard all summer or starve in the winter, and then it has to flap hard all winter or freeze. Poor bee!

But the bee has learned its lesson pretty well. Each one in the hive does its share of work, and so each gets its share of rest and food, and the whole colony prospers.



THE BEACON CLUB

THE EDITOR'S POST BOX

Writing a letter for this corner makes you a member of the Club. Address, The Beacon Club, 16 Beacon Street, Boston, Mass.

20 OAK ST.,
BELMONT, MASS.

Dear Editor: I am a girl of eleven. I go to the Unitarian Sunday school. Our teacher's name is Mrs. Kochersperger. I like her very much. I should like to belong to the Beacon Club and wear its button. I take *The Beacon* and enjoy it very much. I am sending in a little verse I made up for Christmas.

Sincerely yours,
ELEANOR WORCESTER.

(Eleanor's verse arrived too late to be included in the Christmas number, so we are keeping it for another year.—Ed.)

BOX 242, BARNSTABLE, MASS.

Dear Editor: I am a member of the Beacon Club. I have been a member for two years. My letter wasn't printed because it was when Miss Buck died. I have written to two girls of my age, and I would like very much to have someone else of my age write to me. I am eleven years of age.

With the best of wishes to my Club, from

LOUISE HOPKINS.

29 PEARL ST.,
MELROSE HIGHLANDS, MASS.

Dear Editor: I read your suggestion in *The Beacon* and I think it would be fine if we could have a stamp column. My father has been abroad several times and so I have many foreign stamps.

From an interested member,
FAITH CROSSMAN.

Other new members of our Club in Massachusetts are Edward Thommen, Billerica; Virginia Aborn, Brighton; Robert Reed, Lawrence; Alice F. Stoney and Anita Brander, Lexington; Frank Ware, North Pembroke; Merton Richardson, Reading; Lois Chase, Uxbridge; Priscilla Person, Ware; Phyllis Evans, Winchendon; Albert Gaum and Dorothy Twombly, Winchester.

OUR PURPOSE: Helpfulness.
OUR MOTTO: Let your light shine.
OUR BADGE: The Beacon Club Button.

THE CUBS' COLUMN

Dear Cubs: Several of our boys and girls have approved of the suggestion that we have a stamp column on this page, but only one boy has written anything for publication. As stories and verse have been contributed, it seems better not to take this space for a special column. We shall be glad to publish articles or letters about stamps so that members of our Club who are especially interested in this subject may get into touch with each other and perhaps arrange for an exchange of stamps. If we have a larger paper another year — as we hope we may — we will try to have a special column for our stamp collectors. Meantime, write us on any subject in which you are interested.

In this number we are publishing the first part of a story by Leroy Griffith, of Shelbyville, Illinois.

THE BEACON CLUB EDITOR.

The Treasure Cave

BY LEROY GRIFFITH (AGE 13)

PART I

There once lived a poor old man who had to catch fish for his living. One day he was fishing and his hook caught on something which held it tight. The fisherman found that it moved only when he moved it, so he slowly brought it to the top of the water. He found it to be a small chest. He then remembered a story of how some pirates who were being run by sheriffs put a map, which showed the way to their treasure, in a small chest and had sunk it in the river. The poor old fisherman took the chest home and took the lid off.

(To be continued)

2619 ETNA ST.,
BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA.

Dear Editor: I get *The Beacon* every Sunday. I enjoy it so much I should like to belong to the Club. My mother used to read *The Beacon* when she was a little girl, back in Needham, Mass.

FREDERIC A. HAND.

PUZZLERS

Enigma

I am composed of 18 letters.
My 9, 8, 7 is a boy's name.
My 14, 2, 12, 4, 3 is a pronoun.
My 15, 5 is a verb.
My 13, 17, 10, 18 are breakfast food.
My 1, 11 is the abbreviation for credit.
My 14, 15, 16 is a metal.
My 18 is an abbreviation for saints.
My whole is a message to *Beacon* readers.—From a Reader in Newport, R. I.

Pi

Fo lal eth kobos v'ie ader ihts alfi
I klie het cabnoe steb fo lal.

LEROY GRIFFITH.

Decapitations

1. Behead uphold and leave a wager.
2. Behead custom and leave an aromatic herb.
3. Behead an excise and leave a tool for cutting timber.
4. Behead a money lender and leave more certain.
5. Behead insane and leave an abbreviation for advertisement.
6. Behead neighboring and leave a part of your body.

The decapitated letters spell a season.
—Firelight.

Answers to Puzzles in No. 14

Enigma.—Washington Irving.
Riddle.—Trunks.

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